

This Week in Washington



WITH CONGRESSMAN
JO BONNER

Let the Good Times Roll

While many of us “Let the Good Times Roll” as we celebrated Mardi Gras last week, it seems as though President Obama and the Democratic leadership in Congress have taken these words to heart as they continue on a massive spending spree.

Less than two weeks ago, a \$1 trillion “stimulus” bill was rammed through Congress. Putting this extraordinary amount of money in perspective, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said, “if you spent \$1 million a day, every day since Jesus was born, you still wouldn’t have spent \$1 trillion.”

Now, the Democratic House leadership pushed through a \$410 billion omnibus spending bill at the same time the president set forth a budget outline based on tax increases and bigger government.

Last year, the Democratic majority chose not to finish all of the spending bills for the fiscal year 2009; therefore, Congress passed a continuing resolution keeping government spending at the previous year's levels.

The continuing resolution is scheduled to expire this Friday, March 6, and the omnibus spending bill will fund the government for the rest of the fiscal year, which ends October 1.

Before the omnibus bill was considered on the House floor, the House Republican leadership wrote to Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer asking them to consider freezing federal spending at their current levels.

The letter stated that a spending freeze "could ensure that essential government functions are carried out without any cuts while protecting taxpayers from spending increases during a time of economic hardship."

Instead of freezing the current spending levels, the Democratic leadership added billions of dollars in additional funding to federal programs and agencies.

The 2009 omnibus contains funding for nine out of twelve regular Appropriations bills, totaling \$410 billion, a \$32 billion – or an 8 percent– increase over last year’s budget for the same agencies.

In fact, this bill will grow government spending at more than double the rate of inflation and almost triple the rate of median growth in household incomes.

Incredibly, much of the bill contains funding for many of the same agencies and programs that received funding in the “stimulus” bill.

For example, the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services receive \$152 billion in the 2009 omnibus, a \$7.4 billion increase over the 2008 funding level.

The House-passed stimulus bill contained \$124.3 billion for 2009 for the same agencies. When you combine the total funding under both bills for 2009, these departments will receive \$276.6 billion – a 91 percent increase over last year.

In fact, the combined fiscal year 2009 funding for agencies included in both bills is \$680 billion, a \$301 billion increase over 2009 levels.

Perhaps we would not have seen such gargantuan increases in spending levels had these spending bills not been crafted behind closed doors without the involvement of most Members of Congress.

Only three of the bills contained in the omnibus were cleared by the full House Appropriations Committee in a public mark-up. None were considered on the House floor.

On the heels of this massive spending spree, the president offered a budget blueprint that will increase the national debt by \$3 trillion over the next five years.

In fact, the amount of increased debt needed to pay for the spending of the last weeks is the same debt incurred over two centuries, between 1789 and 1978 – and it will be our children and grandchildren who will be paying for it.

The budget will raise taxes on almost all Americans – small businesses, family farms, middle

class families, retirees, 401(k) owners and energy consumers.

When Herbert Hoover raised taxes during a recession, it led to record unemployment and the worst depression in American history.

Friends, now is the time for a responsible budget. It is time we in Washington start making the same sacrifices American families have already been making with their own budgets.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

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